

# LET'S Talk

SPRING 2004

HEALTHY BODIES • SOUND MINDS • A SAFE PLACE TO WORK

## Haven't Logged On Yet? Here's What You Can Find!

At [www.FOH4You.com](http://www.FOH4You.com) you'll find a wealth of EAP-related resources to help you navigate life, including:

### Online Tools Area

- **Self-Assessments:** You'll find nearly two dozen self-assessment tools covering mental health, wellness, work/life, personal development and more.
- **Medication Interaction Database:** Click here to learn how to avoid unsafe drug interaction.
- **Medication Information Center:** Learn more about the medications you are currently taking.

### Life Events Area

Major life events such as adopting a child, caring for an aging loved one, getting married and others can have a significant impact on your emotional well-being. The Life Events area is designed to help you find the tools and information you need to cope.

### Mental Health Area

Everyone needs help from time to time dealing with life's challenges. Turn to the EAP's Web site, [www.FOH4You.com](http://www.FOH4You.com), for more information about something that's concerning you.

We are continuing to improve the Web site; stay tuned for updates.

**800-222-0364**  
**[www.FOH4You.com](http://www.FOH4You.com)**

## What Does Your EAP Offer You?

It is said that in every life, "a little rain must fall." Sometimes life presents all of us with challenges that may seem overwhelming or insurmountable. Most of the time your family, friends, and personal resources get you through. But sometimes, you need more. Did you know that the FOH Employee Assistance Program, your EAP, is there for just such times?

The EAP is available at no cost to you. Counselors are licensed professionals and their services are completely confidential, within the limits of the law. All you need to do is call **1-800-222-0364** — any time, 24/7 — and you will be put in touch with a counselor near you. You may also visit us on our Web site at [www.FOH4You.com](http://www.FOH4You.com). The Web site provides information on such topics as identity theft, family and divorce law, real estate, debt, college funding, and retirement.

EAP counselors are trained to deal with job issues, depression, chemical dependency, anxiety, relationships, parent/child issues, grief, and gambling, to name a few. Counselors also will swing into action if there is ever a workplace incident, traumatic event, or disaster.

Remember, the EAP is a valuable benefit that your agency provides to you. Call us today or visit our Web site to learn more!



### Your EAP Offers:

- 24/7 telephone access to a helpful counselor at **1-800-222-0364**
- Free counseling for you and eligible family members
- Confidential ... follows all privacy and "helping professional" laws
- Convenient access to local counselors
- Basic financial and legal advice with useful materials and discounted local services
- <http://www.FOH4You.com> — Eldercare and childcare articles, wellness tools and articles on health, emotions, and work/life issues
- Critical Incident Stress Management services as may be needed, via phone and onsite
- *Let's Talk*, a quarterly FOH newsletter for personal wellness, with Vitality-on-Demand, an extensive online library of health information

what's new

# Late-Breaking Health News

## >>More Americans than ever are

**buckling up.** A survey by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in 2003 found that seat belt use in the United States was at 79 percent, four percentage points higher than a year earlier.

The survey found that users of sport utility vehicles and vans have the highest use rates, at 83 percent, while pickup truck drivers have the lowest rates, at 69 percent.

Seat belt usage was highest in the West, at 84 percent, and the South, at 80 percent. It was lowest in the Midwest, at 75 percent, and the Northeast, at 74 percent. The survey also found belt use was 6 percent higher in states with primary seat belt laws, which allow police to ticket occupants solely for failing to wear a seat belt.

The 79 percent usage rate is more than five times higher than in 1983, when seat belt surveys first began. The national rate that year was 14 percent.

**>>Several risk factors for prostate cancer are known,** but scientists still aren't sure why some men develop the disease and others don't.

Several studies are under way to explore how prostate cancer might be prevented. These include the use of dietary supplements, such as vitamin E and selenium. In addition, recent studies suggest a diet that regularly includes tomato-based foods may help protect against the disease.

Some aspects of a man's lifestyle may affect his chances of developing prostate cancer. For example, some evidence suggests a link between diet and this disease. Studies show prostate cancer is more common in populations that consume a high-fat diet (particularly animal fat), and in populations that have diets lacking certain nutrients.



## >>VITAMINS AND EXERCISE MAY SLOW THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF AGING.

**One study of men and women over 40 found those who exercised regularly and took vitamin E supplements became healthier and significantly decreased their levels of a blood marker that signals the destruction of certain cells by free radicals. That process, known as free radical-induced oxidative stress, contributes to aging and disease.**


**Study participants who did not exercise but still took vitamin E also showed significant decreases in oxidative stress and blood pressure, according to the study published in the journal *Biological Research for Nursing*. Good sources of vitamin E include spinach, almonds and avocados. But most people are vitamin E deficient, because it can be difficult to get enough of the antioxidant from diet alone.**

**Other studies have shown that free radicals play a role in the development of cancer, obstructed arteries, Alzheimer's disease and some 200 other diseases.**

*See your physician for guidance and advice regarding a specific health condition.*

**A world of additional health information available via your computer.**

You may think of this publication as just a newsletter. But would you believe it's also an access index to one of the largest databases of family health and personal self-care data around? With our free Vitality-on-Demand (VOD) service, you can get all of the information you need any time you want it!

**Look for this symbol  throughout the magazine for topics you would like to learn more about.**

**Placing your VOD order is simple. And it's free.**

**Via the Internet:** Visit our home page at [www.vitality.com](http://www.vitality.com) and press the Vitality-on-Demand button. Enter the three-digit VOD number from this magazine, or you can search by keyword.



## SPECIAL REPORTS

- 540** How to Quit Smoking
- 541** Sensible Weight Loss
- 542** Lowering Your Cholesterol
- 543** Reducing Your Stress
- 544** Walking for Fitness
- 545** Workstation Comfort
- 546** Fixing an Aching Back
- 547** Start An Exercise Program
- 548** Controlling Allergies
- 549** Lowering Health-Care Costs
- 550** Living With Arthritis
- 551** Dealing With Headaches
- 552** High Blood Pressure

## Recognizing Postpartum Depression

**ARE MOOD SWINGS AFTER GIVING BIRTH** merely a passing case of the blues? Or are they a sign of something more serious, such as postpartum depression?

“Postpartum depression is exactly the same thing as major depression; it just happens to occur after pregnancy,” says Candace Brown, Pharm.D., associate professor of pharmacy practice, obstetrics/gynecology and psychiatry at the University of Tennessee.

Symptoms include lasting feelings of sadness or unworthiness, reduced concentration or loss of memory, and listlessness. Some women also feel guilty for not bonding instantly with their baby.

Postpartum depression can start any time in the year after birth but often occurs between the third and sixth weeks, Dr. Brown says. It needs treatment — usually counseling and prescription of an antidepressant.

Fewer than a fifth of new mothers suffer from postpartum depression, Dr. Brown says, but your risk increases if you’ve suffered from depression before. That risk may be compounded by poor coping skills or a strained marriage.

Unlike postpartum depression, the postpartum blues is fairly common and doesn’t require treatment. It’s a fleeting episode of sadness, weepiness, anxiety, irritability or difficulty in thinking clearly that occurs during the week after giving birth. Blame it on changing levels of hormones, the demands of motherhood, the reality of pregnancy ending, or a combination. It usually passes in a week or so.

### >>For More Information

Contact your EAP: **1-800-222-0364**  
Also, you can find articles on the US Department of Health and Human Services’ site for women’s health:  
**www.4woman.gov**

## Paybacks for Lost Sleep

**YOU MAY HAVE YOUR FINANCES IN ORDER**, your bills paid and your budget on track. But if you find it hard to get out of bed in the morning, or feel like falling asleep after lunch, or regularly look forward to the weekend to catch up on your ZZZZs, you may be in debt up to your eyeballs. Sleep debt, that is.

It’s not as funny as it sounds. Until your body starts getting the sleep it needs every night — most people need 8 hours, say the experts — it won’t function as efficiently, your health will be at risk and even your job may be in jeopardy. Over the last hundred years, our average nightly sleep has dropped from 9 to 7.5 hours, with a third of adults now getting an hour less than that.

### The Downside of Staying Up

Researchers know that a lack of deep sleep — as opposed to irregular or fragmented sleep — undermines the body’s ability to fight off disease. Sleepiness also reduces the quality and quantity of people’s work by a third, says Pat Britz, program director at NSF. Nearly one in four of those under 30 say they’re sometimes late to work because they’re too sleepy to get up.

And where you find sleepiness, say experts, you find sleep debt.

In research at the University of Chicago, a group of sleep-deprived men was found to have higher concentrations of sugar in their blood than those fully rested. That could contribute to development of a pre-diabetic condition.



**Sleep debt affects both your body and your mind — seriously**

Eve Van Cauter, Ph.D., a professor of medicine involved in the study, says, “Our ongoing research suggests that the effects of semi-chronic sleep loss may be as profound as those of physical inactivity.”

### A Prescription for Better Sleep

- Go to bed at the same time every night, even on weekends. It keeps your biological clock synchronized.
- Establish a pre-bedtime routine — brushing your teeth or reading — that lets your body know it’s time for sleep.
- Avoid caffeine six hours before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco two hours before bedtime.
- Get up at the same time every day, no matter when you went to sleep.
- Exercise regularly. Those who do sleep better.
- Look to your sleep environment. Sleep in a dark, cool, quiet room on a comfortable mattress.

### >>For More Information

Visit the National Sleep Foundation at **www.sleepfoundation.org**

# Learning the Power of Patience

**YOU KNOW THE PRICE YOU PAY FOR BEING IMPATIENT** — a tightening of the chest, rise in blood pressure and surge of irritation and anger directed at a person or circumstance.

But have you considered the gifts that come with being patient? You make better decisions, reduce your stress and anger and increase your peace of mind.

“Patience with yourself, with other people and with the big and small circumstances of life is a determining factor in your peace of mind,” says M.J. Ryan, author of *The Power Of Patience*.

Ryan defines patience as the capacity to stop before you act so you’re clearly able to decide the best course of action or choose the right words to say instead of simply reacting. Patience accomplishes this by bringing these three qualities of mind and heart together:

- **PERSISTENCE** — patience gives you the ability to work steadily toward your goals and dreams.
- **SERENITY** — patience gives you calmness of spirit. Rather than being thrown into anger, panic or fear by circumstance, you can put it into perspective and keep your cool.
- **ACCEPTANCE** — patience gives you the ability to cope with obstacles graciously and respond to life’s challenges with courage, strength and optimism.



## Patience Boosters

“Patience is something you do, not something you have or don’t have,” says Ryan. “It’s a decision you make again and again. Patience is a quality that can be strengthened like a muscle.”

To strengthen your patience:

- **REFRAME THE SITUATION** by asking yourself one question: How else could I look at this situation that would increase the possibility of a good outcome or greater peace of mind?
- **REMINDE YOURSELF THAT CHANGE IS INEVITABLE.** When times are tough, it’s helpful to remember that this, too, shall pass. Doing so gives you the strength, hope and patience needed to carry on.
- **ASK FOR HELP.** Lots of times we’re impatient because we’re overloaded.

“There’s no prize at the end of your life for doing too much, particularly doing it in a frazzled state,” says Ryan.  
“Perhaps you will encourage others to be more patient as well,” says Ryan.

**FOH** **FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH**  
a component of the US Public Health Service  
Program Support Center  
Department of Health and Human Services

The Federal Consortium EAP provides assessment, counseling, referral, training and consultation to federal employees and agencies throughout the United States. For administrative details about the program, contact Doug Mahy, Federal Occupational Health at 214-767-3030 or [dmahy@psc.gov](mailto:dmahy@psc.gov).

If you have not received the right quantity of newsletters, your address is incorrect or has changed, you would like to have the newsletter sent to you electronically, or you have other questions regarding the newsletter, contact Ayrol Young, Federal Occupational Health, at 312-886-5479 or [ayoung@psc.gov](mailto:ayoung@psc.gov). To visit us on the Web, go to [www.FOH4You.com](http://www.FOH4You.com).

Help available all day, all week, all year.

**1-800-222-0364**

**TTY: 1-888-262-7848**

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Ver. 1

**Most people get nervous in social situations**, such as having to speak in public. However, these are signs you may suffer from social anxiety disorder: You fear meeting new people; you have difficulty asserting yourself; you worry that you'll behave in a way that might cause embarrassment or ridicule. If this sounds like you, seek advice.

*Shape, 21100 Erwin St., Woodland Hills, CA.*

## These simple steps may help reduce your risk for colon cancer:

eat more high-fiber cereal and other whole grains; eat nonfat dairy products or take supplements to increase your vitamin D and calcium consumption; stop smoking; don't drink too much alcohol; take a multivitamin daily; exercise regularly.

*The Journal of the American Medical Association.*

**For every dollar you spend on dental checkups**, you may save up to \$50 in emergency treatment later on.

*Academy of General Dentistry, Chicago, IL.*

**Keep a medical research file if you have a family history of a particular medical condition.** Use the file to store copies of magazines and newspaper articles you read about the condition, copies of book pages dealing with it, contact information for health organizations that specialize in it, brochures from resource organizations and support group information.

*Daily Cornbread by Stephanie Stokes Oliver, Doubleday, 2002.*

**Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes** result in more severe injuries because alcohol seems to reduce the body's tolerance to the forces associated with crashes. Alcohol is linked to 41 percent of crash fatalities and about 1 million injuries every year.

*Research at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.*